

# TORREYA

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## A VISIT TO LETCHWORTH PARK

BY GEORGE V. NASH

Lying in the western part of New York state, in the counties of Wyoming and Livingston, is a wild and picturesque country, through which the Genesee River wends its way. Here, in a strife which was begun in ages past and which is still continued between the waters and the land, this river has cut for itself, in a portion of its course, a deep gorge between two and three miles long. In this distance the river has a fall of about three hundred feet, the greater part of this being concentrated in three falls, known as the upper, middle, and lower falls. Crossing this gorge, immediately above the upper fall, is a bridge, from which one can look down on the swirling waters of the river 232 feet below, just above where they take their plunge of about ninety feet over the upper fall, which stretches itself diagonally across the river in a somewhat curved line, its lower edge resting on the westerly bank. About 2,200 feet below the upper fall is the middle fall, which is said to plunge 110 feet to the waters below. This is by far the largest of the three falls and the most impressive. It has worn itself a deep pit, in which the maddened waters eddy and swirl, finally emerging, humbled and subdued, as a narrow stream, which flows quietly for about a mile and a third, when it again becomes troubled, and makes its final plunge over the lower fall, which has a height of about sixty feet. Here we find Table Rock, a plateau some 800 feet long and about 150 feet wide, almost truncate at its lower end, over which, in times gone by, the river leaped to the waters sixty or seventy feet below. To the right of this Table Rock, as you look down stream, the Genesee rushes madly through a narrow and deep channel it has cut for itself in comparatively recent times. The southerly side of

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this rocky plateau, at one time the bed of the river, must have been of material much softer in nature than the remainder of the rock, else the river would not have made its present channel there. Standing on the edge of this channel and looking into the churning waters below, one cannot help but realize what his fate would be were he to make a misstep and fall. At the western end and in the rear of Table Rock, across an intervening chasm, is the lower fall, resembling more the upper fall in the diagonal line of its brink which has its upper end resting on the north shore. The fall has worn for itself an ample basin, bounded by Table Rock and its own brink, the shape of which, the oldest inhabitants declare, has changed considerably in the past fifty years. Below Table Rock the waters wend their monotonous way, quite changed in character from their aggressiveness of the upper stretches.

It is between the lower and middle falls that the gorge of the Genesee is best developed. Here we find sheer perpendicular precipices rising 300 to 500 feet above the surface of the river, which, viewed from above, looks like a tiny silver thread.

As I have said, it is the middle fall which is the most impressive. And here, within hearing of the constant roar of this falling mass of waters, the spray from which is often carried by the wind onto the house itself, the Honorable James Pryor Letchworth has made his home for over fifty years. It is to the generosity of this gentleman, whose horizon is not bounded by the narrow confines of commercialism, that the public is indebted for this beautiful tract, now accepted by the state as a gift from Mr. Letchworth, and bearing the name of Letchworth Park, a fitting honor commemorating a noble deed. The tract was acquired gradually by Mr. Letchworth by the expenditure of a considerable sum. By the deed of gift he is to enjoy the use of the property as long as he lives, it then passing to the state, under the guardianship of The American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, of which Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan is honorary president and Mr. Geo. F. Kunz president.

The tract embraces over 1,000 acres, and includes both sides of the river for a distance of nearly three miles, comprising in this extent all three of the falls, thus, it is to be hoped, protecting them from the devastating hand of those who see nothing in the

imposing works of nature but dollars and cents and to whom her beauties and the rights of others make no appeal.

Mr. Letchworth lives in a home-like roomy house situated only about 250 feet from the edge of the precipice which makes a sheer descent into the deep pool in front of the fall. Here on bright sunny days rainbows play in the mists constantly arising from the tumbling waters, distant but about 350 feet from the house, and from this Mr. Letchworth has named his home Glen Iris.

The object of my visit to this park was to name and have properly labeled the trees in the vicinity of the roads and paths, which Mr. Letchworth has constructed and is constructing through this tract, that the public may have easy access to all of its beauties. One is at once struck here by the purity of the vegetation. By this I mean the almost entire absence of plants not native to the tract. Even in the immediate neighborhood of the house, where the open lawns would permit of such treatment, but few extraneous species are to be found. Such plants are, however, represented by the horse-chestnut (*Aesculus Hippocastanum*), of Greece, the sweet or yellow buckeye (*Aesculus octandra*), of the southeastern United States, and the fetid or Ohio buckeye (*Aesculus glabra*), of the central United States. Others of this nature are the sweet gum (*Liquidambar Styraciflua*), the Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*), of Europe, the maiden-hair tree (*Ginkgo biloba*), of China, the purple form of the European beech (*Fagus sylvatica purpurea*), the Norway spruce (*Picea excelsa*), of Europe, in some noble specimens, and the Colorado spruce (*Picea Parryana*). It is plain on all sides that every attempt has been made to keep things as nature made them. The arboreal vegetation is well represented, and in one region down near the lower fall, inaccessible to the lumberman on account of the precipitous bluff on one side and the raging waters of the river on the other, are some large trees, perhaps representing the original growth. I had a most enjoyable time for two days going over this tract. Of course in that limited period it was not possible to make an exhaustive study of the trees, my operations being confined to the vicinity of the paths, but here a large proportion of the species must be represented.

Among the conifers the most common tree is the white pine (*Pinus Strobus*). This grows in great quantities, springing up

readily on all unoccupied lands. Occasionally, where the destroying ax of the lumberman did not do its deadly work before Mr. Letchworth acquired possession of the land, large specimens of this tree are to be found. The next conifer in point of frequency is also a pine (*Pinus resinosa*), the Canadian, Norway, or red pine. This also has attained a great size in places, especially along the path which skirts the north shore of the river on the way to the lower fall. The red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) occurs sparingly. The hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) is also quite common, vying in frequency with the Canadian pine. The tulip-tree (*Liriodendron Tulipifera*) is quite conspicuous in places with its shaft-like columnar trunks, and the American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) added a touch of gray to the forest. The American elm (*Ulmus americana*), the chestnut (*Castanea dentata*), and the American linden or basswood (*Tilia americana*), are of frequent occurrence. The dreaded chestnut disease, which is causing such havoc to these trees in the vicinity of New York City, does not appear as yet to have reached this neighborhood. A single tree of the white basswood (*Tilia heterophylla*) was observed on the brink of the precipice, not far from the house. The paper or canoe birch (*Betula papyrifera*) and the yellow birch (*Betula lutea*) are occasionally met with. The American hornbeam (*Carpinus caroliniana*) is not as common as the hop-hornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*). The common wild black cherry (*Padus serotina*), with its rough checkered bark, is not uncommon. Among the hickories the small-fruited hickory (*Hicoria microcarpa*) is much more frequent than the shag-bark (*Hicoria ovata*). The ashes yield but one species, so far as observed, that was common, and this was the white ash (*Fraxinus americana*). A second species with a tall straight trunk was observed, but the foliage was borne so high in the air that it was not possible to make a satisfactory determination of it. From leaflets picked up on the ground I am strongly inclined to think it is the green ash (*Fraxinus lanceolata*). Its bark was very coarse and deeply furrowed. The maples yielded the sugar maple (*Acer Saccharum*) in abundance, and the red maple (*Acer rubrum*) more sparingly. Of the black sugar maple (*Acer nigrum*) only a few specimens

were seen. The oaks are perhaps the most numerous as to species, of which five were noted. These are: the white oak (*Quercus alba*), the most abundant; the red oak (*Quercus rubra*), perhaps next in frequency; the black oak (*Quercus velutina*); the chestnut or yellow oak (*Quercus acuminata*); and the gray oak (*Quercus borealis*). Other trees seen in the tract are the walnut (*Juglans nigra*), rare; the butternut (*Juglans cinerea*), common; the buttonwood or sycamore (*Platanus occidentalis*), rare; the large-toothed aspen (*Populus grandidentata*), the cottonwood (*Populus deltoides*), and the balm of Gilead (*Populus candicans*); the cucumber-tree (*Magnolia acuminata*) was quite frequent, especially in the woods bordering the path on the north side of the river on the way to the lower fall; and the flowering dogwood (*Cynoxylon floridum*).

The shrubby vegetation was not particularly noted, as the time was fully occupied in inspecting the trees. One could not help but notice a number of species of the thorn (*Crategus*), some of them really small trees. The witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*) was attractive in its yellow flowers, just unfolding. The spice-bush (*Benzoin Benzoin*), the speckled or hoary alder (*Alnus incana*), and the dockmackie (*Viburnum acerifolium*) were among those seen. There were many herbaceous plants, but the time at my disposal would not permit of even a cursory examination of them. It would be an interesting work to prepare a list of all the plants growing wild within the confines of this park, and such a list might perhaps have its value to the public.

Another interesting feature of Letchworth Park is what is known as the Council House grounds, a small area so named on account of the presence there of an old Indian council house, moved from its former site by Mr. Letchworth for preservation here. This house was taken down under Mr. Letchworth's directions, each part being carefully numbered, and erected again in its original form. Near by stands a modern structure containing a valuable collection of Indian relics. And not far off is the grave of Mary Jamison, a white woman who had rather a checkered career in her enforced life among the Indians.

Mr. Letchworth informed me that many people visit the

grounds, which are open every week day and during the afternoon on Sundays, the latter a recent innovation to accommodate visitors who are not able to visit the park at other times. People come from Rochester, Buffalo, and other neighboring towns, often in the form of classes or excursions of considerable size. The region is accessible from Portage, a station on the Erie Railroad, distant from New York City about 363 miles. This station is but a short distance from the bridge, referred to in the early part of this article, across which one must go to reach the system of paths installed by Mr. Letchworth. From this bridge one gets his first introduction to the gorge of the Genesee, for a magnificent view is obtained, from this high vantage point, of the falls and gorge.

The whole tract is beautiful and impressive with its rugged wild scenery, the grandeur of its water falls, and the feeling of the wild that pervades it all. The public and the state are certainly to be congratulated upon the acquisition of so beautiful a park, and it is devoutly hoped that no mercenary interests, for none others would have the inclination nor the audacity, will succeed in accomplishing anything that will mar the beauty and the grandeur of this, one of nature's finest works.

NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN.

## SOME RARE AND INTERESTING PLANTS OF BERKS COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

BY W. H. LEIBELSPERGER

Notwithstanding the fact that some of the plants here listed may never have been credited to this locality, they have all been found by the writer in his many botanical and ornithological tramps. The plants listed have been found either on the Irish Mountains south of Fleetwood, on the Blue Mountains, which lie about fifteen miles north of the Irish Mountains, or in the vast stretch of hills and lowlands between these mountains.

The "Illustrated Flora" of Britton and Brown has been followed in nomenclature and arrangement.

*Ophioglossum vulgatum* L. Rare. Specimens of this odd little